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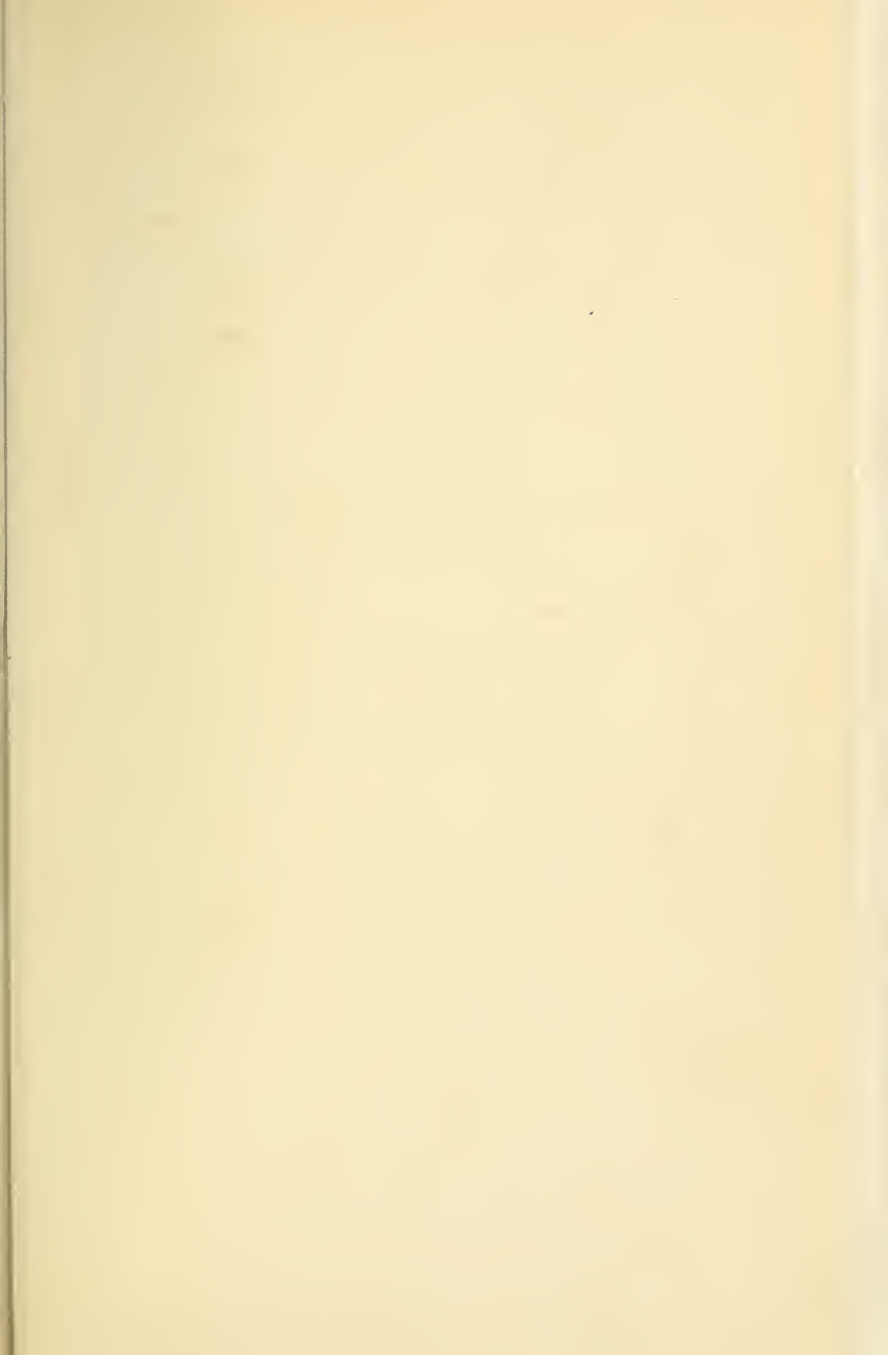


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CHEIRO.

IF WE ONLY KNEW

AND

OTHER POEMS

BY

(CHEIRO, pseud.)
Hamon, Louis
'''

AUTOGRAPHED EDITION

ONE GUINEA

F. TENNYSON NEELY

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Preface.

EVEN wayside flowers have been known to gladden. These humble poems are similar in their history : they have not been trimmed down to suit class or creed ; they have grown in and out amongst the brambles of life, and they are now but tied up in this form at the request of numerous wanderers by the highway to whose hearts for some reason they have appealed.

THE AUTHOR.

DECEMBER, 1895.





If We Only Knew.

IF we only knew, if we only knew
But a little part of the things we see,
Methinks the false would be oft more true
Than what is truth—or what *seems to be* :
If we only knew—if we only knew !

If we only knew the pain we cause
By the slighting look or the word of shame,
By the seeking out of those old, old flaws
That one scarce could help in the race for fame ;
If we only knew that the deeds we scorn
Might some day fall to ourselves to do,
Or if not us, to our babes unborn :
If we only knew—if we only knew !

If we only knew how the man we spurn
Had fought temptation—ay, day and night ;
If we only knew, would we so turn
And cast him off as a loathsome sight ?
Ah me ! instead of the sinner's brand,
We'd gladly help him the right to do ;
We'd lift him up with each honest hand,
If we only knew—if we only knew !

If we only knew how the woman fell,
Would we shun her as now, whene'er we meet ?
Would we leave her then to that bitter hell
Of self and sin and the homeless street ?
Would we shrug our shoulders and toss our head
For trusting too much, or being too true,
Or sinning, perhaps, as some do, for bread ?
If we only knew—if we only knew !

If we only knew of that girl last night
Who stood for a moment just at our door,
Ere she turned away from the cheerful light
And sought the silence of Death's still shore,
Would we deem her mad, or turn aside
From half-starved lips so cold and blue,
If they could tell us just why she died ?
If we only knew—if we only knew !

* * * * *

If we only knew that the hearts we miss
Would have stayed so short in this vale of woe,
How much more sweet would have been each kiss !
But we did not know—we did not know.
Regrets are useless, and tears but blind,
And empty words can no past undo ;
It's no good sighing—I'd been more kind
If I only knew—if I only knew !





If.

IF Fate were naught—and we were wise,
How calmly would we plan the earth !
There'd be no sorrow, tears, or dearth ;
Nothing but joy would fill our eyes
If Fate were naught—and we were wise.

Ah yes ! how well we'd lay each plan !
In life, in love, we'd all agree ;
We'd make no blunders ; we would see
The wisest choice for girl or man
If Fate were naught—how well we'd plan !

If Fate were naught—and we were wise,
All things our wondrous minds would see ;
We'd make "the present " change "to be ;"
We'd write "it must " across the skies.
If Fate were naught—and we were wise,
Ah ! what a hash all things would be !





In Memoriam.

I STOOD and watched her eyelids close—
The eyes that loved me long and well,
The eyes in which love seemed to dwell,
From which my purest thoughts arose.

God loved her too, and He, all-wise,
Deemed her too pure for me or mine ;
Took her up mid His saints to shine,
And filled with tears my weary eyes.

For ah ! the God of Love knew well
That where she was, there was my prize ;
That I would even seek the skies,
If I with her might hope to dwell.

And so along life's path I roam
Half fearing lest we ne'er might meet,
Half fearing lest my wayward feet
Should lead me from my darling's home.





NO crown without some cross,
No life without some loss,
No rose without some thorn,
No night without some morn,
No love without some cloud,
No home without some shroud,
No joy without some pain—
Yet life is not in vain ;
Some day all will be plain.





Fate.



COME, kiss me right on the lips, my love,
And kiss me again, dear heart, dear heart ;
Come hold me closer, my life, my love.

Why did you whisper that we must part ?
You're going away ?—oh, it cannot be
That you've come to-night to say good-by !
But 'twill only be for a season, love—
What do you mean by that weary sigh ?

You cannot mean it—what have you said ?
That you must leave me and go away ?
But I gave you my love and we were wed
A year ago this very day.
What are you saying ?—the deed was false.
My heart is breaking, my words are wild ;
But one thing binds, tho' all laws may fail—
You have forgotten—our child—our child !

* * * * *

When years were over he came again,
A moneyed man in the world's high place ;
He passed the house and he stopped to think
Just for a moment of her sweet face.
"I wonder," thought he, "how fares the child,
That baby-girl with those eyes of blue.
How strange it is that, tho' men are wild,
They rarely suffer for what they do !"

Just at that moment a fair young face
Came down the roadway and crossed the street.
And the old man turned ; for so much grace
Is not the lot of all men to meet.
She was fair and young—but oh ! so false
That tales about her are best untold.
She played with men as one plays with straws,
And balanced hearts but by weight of gold.

She passed again—she had angled well ;
By but a toss of that peerless head.
Old fools are worst ; and the old man fell,
And scandal whispered that he would wed.
He had millions to spend—she loved his gold ;
She dragged his name from its lofty place ;
She ruled his household, for he was old
And deaf and blind, to his own disgrace.

One day his marriage was noised abroad.
At night a supper was served in state ;
She sat beside him and drank each toast.
The last she drank was a toast to Fate.
“To Fate !”—the old man laughed and said—
“I’ll tell you a tale of my early life,
A woman I loved—we’ll call it Fate—
She was the image of this, my wife.”

He told the tale of that cruel night,
For passion and wine had flushed his face.
“You’re like my old love, child,” he said,
“And you forever shall take her place.”
He had not noticed that while he spoke
Her lips had changed to a deadly white ;
And o’er her features a strange look broke,
And in her eyes was a wild, fierce light.

And leaning out o'er the snowy cloth
Her shapely hands with a long knife played,
While the old man told of his heartless life
And gave as a toast to the bride he'd made.
But springing up in her fierce, mad hate,
"Never!" she cried, in her accents wild,
"*You* killed my mother—laugh now at Fate—
You die for her—*I am her child!*"





Singing.



To sing is to stand at God's threshold,
To break for a moment life's chains,
To rise o'er the "feelings that fetter,"
To lose in God's heavenly strains
The self and the serfdom that bind us
Like cords that are woven with pains.

To sing—be it ever so humbly—
Is to use the most God-given gift,
To stand as a Saviour—a giver,
To counsel, to comfort, to lift,
To carry love, power, dominion
To all ; for the singer would win
And carry all up to God's threshold
And leave them *a little within*.





IT is so hard to love—and not be loved,
So hard to never, never see the light,
To live as in a dream of fancies fair,
To wake and find it always, always night,
To still the thoughts that rise to trembling lips,
To hush the words that ask for speech in vain,
To live a life of one long drear eclipse,
And smile to hide the sharpness of the pain.





Waiting.



KNOW no pain beyond the pain of waiting,
The weary waiting for what cometh not ;
The pang of having loved, and ever knowing
That love lives on mid promises forgot.

I know no tears beyond the tears of being
Voiceless in the agony of dumb despair ;
The void within the heart, and it so spreading
That all things fade that once were, oh, so fair.

I know no hunger past the hollow yearning
That feeds the heart with some half-stifled moan ;
The begging for the bread, and the receiving
Not e'en the crumbs that fall—only a stone.

I know no death beyond the pang of dying
When love comes back and stands without the gate ;
When blighted life, from life, forever flying,
Tears out its heart and cries—'Too late ! too late !





Eileen.

SO you'd like me to tell you a story,
If I've anything strange or new ;
You won't mind if it's not of glory,
Or deeds that all heroes do.
For to-night my thoughts keep turning
To a simple tale that is true.

Far from here, 'mong the hills of Galway,
Where the valleys are always green,
Where life seems to pass in a slumber,
'Neath the light of love's golden sheen,
There comes to my heart with the picture
A strange kind of life like a dream.

A dream of a woman so tender—
So tender, so lovely, so true—
That I pause in life's march to remember
An' tell the strange story to you ;
An' methinks she is here at this moment
To help with my heart's sad review.

Oh, God ! how I loved that woman !
To think of it now makes me start ;
'Twas a love, ay, more than is human,
Ay, more than is good for the heart ;
For the soul in the depths of my bosom
Of that love and that life had a part.

An' thus our lives were so blended,
We cared not what scandal was spread,
Tho' the priests and the people contended
That cursed were those who had wed
Without some white altar before them,
And words that are usually said.

So they drove us forth from the village,
But we cared not, an' wandered away,
Away o'er the vales an' the valleys,
To the seashore, an' there in a bay
I built a rough hut from the wreckage,
Just out of the reach of the spray.

An' we lived there like children together,
On the fruits of the land an' the sea ;
Ay, lived there as wild as the weather,
That ofttimes was wild as could be.
For we loved an' were happy together,
For she was life's sunshine to me.

But alas ! too well I remember
One day when the summer was spent,
The landlord with bailiffs behind him
Came down an' demanded some rent—
Some rent for our poor little cabin ;
I scarce knew at first what he meant.

But he laughed at our prayers an' entreaties,
An' said to his men, " Bring a light ;
We'll make such a fire of this wreckage,
That ships may be lost in its sight."
So they did—an' he whispered to Eileen
A thought that was blacker than night.

But what could I do, being a peasant,
To guard my poor darling from him ?
I just whispered to God to control me,
Lest then I were tempted to sin,
As I saw him ride off in the distance,
Till the twilight grew lonesome an' dim.

Then I turned me round to my darling,
An' looked at my Eileen so bright,
An' whispered, "Child, pray to your Maker,
That you always keep pure in His sight ;
For I fear me some evil is coming
On the blackened wide wings of the night."

But Eileen—she laughed at forebodings,
An' looking away to the west,
Said, "Ah, no, let us pray for the sailors
To-night on the ocean's wild crest."
So the two of us knelt down together,
An' left to our Maker the rest.

There we lay in the light of our cabin,
That was blazing away through the night,
While the billows grew louder an' louder,
An' the storm was increasing in height,
When suddenly out in the darkness
Came a terrible shriek of affright.

'Twas a wreck on the rocks beyond us,
An' there in the surf at our door
Was a man in the wild, rough billows,
Not a hundred yards from the shore.
She looked at him, then she kissed me,
And sighed as she looked out once more.

That kiss seemed to give me new courage,
That kiss seemed to fly through my blood ;
In a second I was out in the breakers,
An' battling with foam an' with flood.
I was strong, but they were the stronger,
An' I gasped with each watery thud.

I was out in the breakers struggling,
But had scarcely yet left the shore,
When I thought that I heard my darling
Scream higher than even the roar
Of wind an' wave and of billow ;
But I could not think of it more.

For just then I was close to the sailor,
As faintly he seemed to moan,
"Oh, my God ! my God ! I'm drowning,
Drowning now in the sight of home."
Then I remembered no more but the struggling
In that awful wide waste of foam.

* * * * *

When I came to myself, 'twas daylight ;
I was lying there on the sand,
With the man I had saved bending o'er me,
Holding fast to his heart my hand ;
An' I looked an' I started—God help me !
He was heir to my tyrant's broad land.

Then I thought of Eileen, my Eileen,
An' I tried to walk up the shore,
Till I saw the cabin still smoking
An' hingeless the now blackened door ;
An' the previous night seemed to cross me
With a cry I had heard before.

I rushed to the waves in my frenzy,
Scanned their billows far, near, an' wide,
Then saw in a kind of mad envy
That they lapped at my feet in their pride ;
An' I prayed an' I begged and besought them
To give me my darling, my bride.

But they mocked at my wild entreaties
With their ghastly upturned lips,
With their foam wreaths forever curling
From the rocks an' the sandy slips,
With the happy songs that they bore me
From the decks of the far-off ships.

* * * * *

For the waves were in love with my darling ;
They had dragged her down to their bed.
An' I dream that they deck her with jewels,
With corals an' rubies so red,
That they mock the sweet lips of my Eileen—
The lips of the loved an' the dead.





Regrets.



H ! the glorious golden summer !
Ah ! the happy joyous murmur
Of the birds !

With the fragrance of the flowers
Comes the thought of buried hours,
Bygone words.

As each petal opes before us,
Visions sad come crowding o'er us
Of the past.

Once again the days of childhood
Pass amid the waving wild wood
All too fast ;

Once again the press of fingers
In our own a moment lingers,
Loath to part ;

And the thoughts we'd fain have vanish
Rise as ghosts we cannot banish
From each heart.

* * * * *

Once again harsh words are spoken,
Golden links lie rudely broken
Of life's chain.

Summer may with golden glory
Gild the opening of my story,
But the pain —

Ah ! the pain, the pain of parting,
In my weary bosom smarting,
Sears my breast.
*She is laid where grasses waving
Swell my heart's wild, ceaseless craving
For its rest.*

Summer past, the Autumn follows :
Fading flowers, fleeing swallows,
Wild birds hushed and winds that, sighing,
Chant of days that know no dying ;
And my heart, so sad and dreary,
Sees the changing of earth's scene,
And it asks, " When life is weary,
Will she lift the veil between ?"
When the summer leaves are shaded
Will her sweet voice some day call—
Some day when life's flowers have faded,
And the leaves of Autumn fall ?





Dead.



YOU'RE lying dead—and I've followed the bier
Over the streets to the burial ground ;
But why should I falter—why should I fear
A marble cross and a grassy mound ?

The world has said you were happily wed,
That I was a husband fond and true,
A man respected—an honored head
(What would they think if they only knew ?)

But ! you were a woman—you stood in my way,
You, who had only good thoughts to give ;
Others had money—alack-a-day—
I often thought that you could not live.

A little drug when the night was still
(Ah, how well does my memory serve !) ;
'Tis easy enough methinks to kill,
If one has only the strength of nerve.

You lay in my arms that cursed night,
Your innocent face pressed closed to mine ;
You little thought as you went to sleep
You slept indeed in the arms of crime.

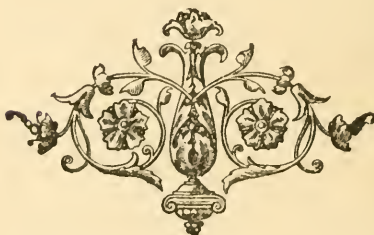
But why should I think of those words you said,
Or that awful look as you passed away ?
What's done is done, and what's dead is dead—
There's no such thing as a reckoning day.

And yet methinks, as the earth rolls in,
You stretch your arms from your narrow tomb ;
You hiss in my ears my awful sin—
Oh God !—if these people would give me room !

They're crowding round me on every side,
Pushing me, pushing me to the grave—
Back, fellows, back !—is the ground not wide ?
I gasp for breath—is there none to save ?

* * * * *

Her hand is closing upon my throat,
Her haunting eyes have grown fixed on mine—
Who are these jailers ?—what have I done ?
Oh God ! I've told them my deed of crime !





A Creed.

LIVE for some earnest purpose,
Live for some noble life,
Live for the hearts that love you,
Live that you conquer strife ;
Live that the world may find you
Honest and pure of thought,
Live tho' it frown upon you,
Live as all true men ought.

What does it matter, brother,
If in the race for fame
The one gains a gilded carriage,
The other a poor man's name ?
Life's but a little season,
Naught but a passing cloud ;
One day it lives in sunshine,
The next—the winding shroud.

Why do you live ? you murmur ;
Why do you die ? I ask,
When the golden good of kindness
Lies oft within thy grasp.
'Tis but a word of comfort,
'Tis but a softened heart,
'Tis but a look of pity
When tears are seen to start.

"Tis but a word of guidance,
Only a friendly touch,
One moment's self-denial ;
But oh ! it is so much,
That heavy hearts grow lighter,
And life is robbed of pain,
And somewhere in the world
Yours is the greater gain.

* * * *

Be ye, then, Jew or Gentile,
Ask not the other's creed ;
For if the flower be spotless,
Care ye where grow the seed ?
Live for the one true purpose
That honest hearts may rise,
Work thro' the noon of manhood ;
And when the evening dies
There need be no forebodings—
Angels will close thine eyes.





Where ?

THEY said that Heaven was over there,
And pointed towards the snowy clouds
That floated by like aimless crowds
Of long-dead thoughts in sunlit air.

And I looked up in mute dismay
And murmured low : If such ye teach,
'Tis far too high for me to reach ;
And so I sadly turned away.

And wandered on, and on, and on,
With scarce a purpose or command,
Half hoping that in some lone land
I'd wake and find Life's torment gone.

But lo ! amid my soul's despair,
I reached an alley in a town,
And saw a woman bending down,
O'er sick and weary hearts of care.

And as I looked, methought a voice
Spoke softly at the woman's side :
For such as these a Saviour died ;
Do you do likewise, and rejoice.

Rejoice that Heaven lies not away
Beyond the clouds or starlit dome,
*But in each heart and in each home,
And in the deeds of every day.*



Life.



H ! life is a maze of partings and meetings,
An hour of delight and a day of despair ;
We pause for a moment to gather the greetings,
We pass and repass like the phantoms of air.

We think for a moment : Ah, now we are happy,
The brightness of loving can have no eclipse !
But while we are thinking, the sunlight is sinking,
And so with dead kisses we moisten our lips.

We smile by forgetting the past with its sorrow,
We live by imagining moments more fair ;
We conquer to-day by the dream of to-morrow,
We read by the rushlight of fancies that were.

Thus toiling and resting, and doubting and testing,
We carry our burden 'mid gladness and strife,
But while we are thinking, the sunlight is sinking,
And this is the thing that we worship as—Life.





Lilies.



WOMAN stood and watched awhile
A river and some lilies white ;
Her face was fair—no trace of guile
Lay in her eyes so pure and bright.
She liked the lilies and the stream,
But ah, the weeds soon pained her sight ;
She murmured low, "God made the scene,
And yet I doubt if it be right."

Just as she spake, from down the glen
The rough winds swayed the lilies tall ;
They bow, they bend, they soon would break—
But weeds support them ere they fall.
But she, too pure to see its truth,
Went thinking but of lilies fair,
Not knowing that her age and youth
Were at that moment acted there.

Again she came—a year had fled ;
She'd been too proud—lilies too tall,
Be they the purest of their kind,
'Tis often said are first to fall.
The glen was calm—no sound was heard,
Save lily leaves that tapped the lake :
She murmured low, "O God, forgive,
For e'en thy purest lilies break."

But as she toyed with Death awhile,
Ere to her lips she pressed his cup,
Close to her side a deep voice said,
“But may not weeds bear lilies up?
Thou art more fair and not less frail;
A fall but makes each step more sure;
To love is human—if we fail,
Still to the pure all things are pure.”

So ends the tale—go thou and see
The weeds and lilies in Life's stream;
Thy heart may tell thee more, my friend;
Go, think it o'er—'tis not a dream.





AY in thy future there be hid somewhere
So much of light and love, that you may deem
All nature came, and making life a dream,
Made it most fair.

To —



T matters not if thou be understood
In thy great effort for the greatest good ;
Thy motive high, thy purpose life's demands—
What matter then aught else ?—God understands.



ND would we question fate? Methinks
In life's long chain we are the little links
That stretch the endless whole ; and thus I teach,
As part of life so are we part of each.





Easter.

*The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early * * * and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.—John xx. i.*



AS it not Mary who in early dawn
Was first to find the breaking of the day—
Mary the sinful one, Mary the scorned,
Who came so early to the grave to pray?

Was it not Mary who with glad acclaim
Gave forth the truth—of but an empty tomb,
Of Christ, the risen Lord, who conquered shame,
Who stood triumphant over Death and gloom?

And yet in after days of "Christian light"
The Magdalen is scarce allowed a place;
The cloak we give is but the darkest night,
To hide the tears that trickle down her face.

Oh God, how good we are that we must make
Such fine distinctions with each class and creed!
How wise to do it but for Thy dear sake,
And not for vain position or for greed! (?)

How kind in us to send to foreign shores,
To teach the pagan how to live above
All base deceit—that e'en the heathen stores
May be conducted with "our Christian love"!

Oh God, of all the human and the right,
Our creeds have cast us in a narrow mould ;
They fain would make us without soul or sight,
But fit for barter as the coins we hold.

Our guides are but as puppets in the poll,
Our sacred thoughts are weighed by gain or loss,
Our temples have no shelter for the soul,
Though spire and dome be sculptured in a cross.

* * * * *

Oh God, of all the noble and the true,
Make us more human—and in thus divine,
That from the hearts long dead may rise anew
A Living Christ in this, Thy Easter-time.





Christmas Eve.



AN angel floats o'er our homes to-night
With wings outspread 'neath the stars of light,
With eyes of love that on all look down
From the Heaven of peace to the crowded town ;
And the angel prays in the night air calm,
And stars repeat her half-whispered psalm
From sphere to sphere and from height to height,
"Let there be peace in this town to-night."

She lifts her hands, and the blessing falls,
On lowest hovels, on lordliest halls,
On darkest alleys, on streets of light,
"Let there be peace in this town to-night."
Ay, peace to all—to the factory room,
To its whirling wheels and its rattling loom,
To its weary workers, so worn and white,
"Let there be peace in this town to-night."

To all, to all, there is none too low,
Or none too crushed with their weight of woe,
Or none too high for Good Will to reach,
As part of life are we part of each.
To she who sinneth, and he who sinned,
To that poor outcast so dunned and dinned,
To tramp and beggar, to lord, to slave,
To ships that ride on the wint'ry wave,
And to that mourner that bows the head
To the sainted names of the newly dead,
May comfort come, and may they see
That all is good, and is best to be.

To orphaned ones, to those heirs of care
That are homeless, houseless, everywhere,
May some sweet act of kindness wrought
Redeem the name of Christian thought ;
And to those others that somehow came,
As gifts of love or as marks of shame,
May they feel no sorrow, no sin, no slight,
In the shadowing peace of God's love to-night.





The Burning of Hinckley.

An Incident of Western Life.



ALL aboard ! all aboard ! " the clang of the engine-bell,

An' we stretched our hands thro' the windows, an'
bade them a long farewell.

We were goin' back to the East, sir, for Jack had a vow to keep—

" A wife in bond," I believe he said, an' he was behind a week.

But that wasn't due to bein' careless, sir, but due to that awful drought

An' the fires around the farmstead that had kept us for weeks in doubt ;

For they rose when we thought them conquered—if you ever have lost your rest

By travellin' across the country, you may know what a blaze is West.

Well, this year it was somethin' awful, for the forests were all on fire,

An' waves of flame for miles and miles rose higher an' ever higher ;

An' the oldest in Minnesota could not, in their bygone days, Remember or even imagine the fierceness of that last blaze.

If you've seen a West'rn fire, sir, you know what I mean when I say

That the pictures of the judgment ain't in it, by a long, long way,

With those forests of pine an' undergrowth, an' grass eight
feet in height,
That somehow catch fire and blaze, sir, ay, morn an' noon
an' night.
But Jack an' myself had won, sir ; we were safe in the rail-
road train,
With many a burn on our face an' hands, with many a scar
an' stain,
But stains from honest toil, sir, an' 'tis such makes the no-
blest crest ;
Those are the heraldic signs, sir, that we honor an' love out
West.
But we'd soon be back in the East now—we hadn't been
home for years—
An' as we talked of the dear old place, I saw in Jack's eyes
the tears ;
For he was that kin' o' chap, sir, who'd never say die in a
fight,
While the name of home or mother in a moment would
queer his sight.
We'd been sittin' still for hours, sir, for the noise an' burr of
the train
Had a kind o' soothin', calmin' effect after such weeks of
strain,
When Jack, he bent over an' roused me, an' pointed away to
the right,
Where a bank of smoke rose up to the sky, black as the
wings of night ;
With a kin' o' shake in his voice, too, he whispered within
my ear :
" Mate, if yon forest takes fire, it will be over with us, I
fear."
I laughed at him for a moment, till I saw that the woods
behind
Lay right in the arms of the fire an' straight in the teeth of
the wind ;

And before us on either side, sir, they stretched like a great
dark wall,
With that cloud of smoke comin' onward, with a shape like a
funeral pall ;
An' my heart stood still in my bosom for them childer and
women folk
Who were standin' up in the windows, half scared by the
blindin' smoke.
On, on, went the train in the darkness, for, tho' it was only
noon,
It was black as pitch all around us—ay, dark as the day of
doom ;
But away we went tearin' onward, each second increasin' our
speed,
For there was a man in that engine, a hero in thought an' in
deed—
A man who a few weeks before, sir, they disgraced for aidin'
a strike,
But face to face with our danger, he showed what a hero is
like ;
For what did he do at Hinckley?—tho' he hadn't a moment
to spare—
He brought that train to a stand, sir, an' took on the few
that were there.
For Hinckley was burned to ashes, an' before our nigh sight-
less eyes
The flames of each cottage an' homestead rose up to the
blackened skies,
An' the bodies of men and cattle, escapin' in their mad
flight,
Were o'ertaken and burned together—ay, almost before our
sight.
But that hero there in the engine, he wouldn't pull off from
the place
Till he'd saved full many a hundred—then he entered for
that mad race.

An' you should have seen how the wheels flew ; but were they
ten times more fast,
Full many of us on the cars, sir, had reckoned that day as
our last ;
For the fire had burst through the forest—oh God ! how it
seemed to gain !
As it neared us, an' neared us, an' neared us, till the heat of
the flyin' train
Scorched us, as huddled together like cattle we lay on the
floor,
Half blind by the smoke an' the flames, sir, half deaf by that
awful roar,
For the tongues of fire that followed seemed to hiss with
the sparks that fell
Like the hiss of a million demons let loose from the flames
of hell.

* * * * *

An' Jack, he suddenly whispered : " If it should be your
fate to get thro',
I want you to tell my old woman that I did just as good
as I knew
While struggling to make her a homestead, an' while I was
out in the West
I was always honest and upright—I tried to do what was best ;
An' tell her, mate, how I loved her, an' how in this moment
of doom——"
But Jack didn't finish his sentence, for he fell at my feet in
a swoon.
An' I took him up in my arms, sir, an' I fought to get him
some air,
An' I carried him up to the engine, but I laid him down in
despair,
For the flames were leapin' around it—ay, leapin' up higher
an' higher,
Till the only thing you could see, sir, was a blindin' white
sheet of fire.

I'd have lost my head at that moment if I hadn't caught
hold of the sight
Of two brave lads on the engine still out in the thick of the
fight ;
Their clothes were burnt on their backs, sir, the cab of the
engine was red,
The flesh of their hands was blistered—still the furnace they
rapidly fed
As they urged that engine onwards, for they knew that a
swampy creek
Was lyin' not far before them, an' they made for that narrow
streak.
I looked back at the train for a second—oh God ! what an
awful sight !
For the fire had reached the end, now, an' that car was a
blaze of light.
An' the rest were about to follow, when, sickened, I turned
away—
But there, just lyin' ahead, sir, was the first faint glimpse of
the day ;
An' there lay the creek before us—I wanted to call for a
cheer,
To tell to the comrades behind us of help and relief so
near.
But my heart nigh stopped for dread, sir ; a somethin' nigh
choked my speech,
For there was a bridge o'er the gap, sir, an' the fire was well
in reach,
An' sappin' each post and each pillar, an' lickin' each rod an'
rail.
Oh God ! it was awful to see it—ay, awful just then to
fail.
But those heroes there on the engine, they thought they'd a
moment to spare—
We were out on the bridge in a second—there wasn't e'en
time for a prayer—

When away went the blazin' timbers—a crash and a deaf-
enin' roar ;
But we'd crossed, sir—crossed in safety—an' were saved on
the other shore.

* * * * *

An' now for a cheer for those heroes ; if you love to give
honor its due,
If you value your country's record of deeds that are great
and true,
If you'd like to encourage duty, and actions both brave and
right,
Give a ringin' cheer for those heroes, be they far or near
to-night.



BE thou what God has made of thee—
A lily fair on life's calm lake—
That all thy friends may always be
In love with love for love's sweet sake.



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